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# Māori leader Rawiri Waititi removed from New Zealand parliament after performing haka

By Rob Picheta, CNN · 15 hrs ago

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The co-leader of New Zealand's Māori Party has been removed from parliament for the second time this year, after performing a ceremonial dance during a debate about indigenous rights.

© Nick Perry/AP Maori Party co-leader Rawiri Waititi poses for a photo outside New Zealand's Parliament in Wellington. The Indigenous New Zealand lawmaker was thrown out of Parliament's debating chamber Wednesday, May 12, 2021, for performing a Maori haka in protest at what he said were racist arguments. Waititi's stance came after ongoing debate among lawmakers about the government's plans to set up a new Maori Health Authority as part of sweeping changes to the health care system.

Rawiri Waititi interjected while Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern was taking questions from lawmakers on Wednesday, accusing the country's opposition party of "racist propaganda and rhetoric."

After a tense exchange with the Speaker, which resulted in his microphone being turned off, Waititi began the traditional Māori haka and was asked to leave.

The haka, a ceremonial war dance performed before events including New Zealand rugby matches, is intended as a challenge to opponents and a rallying cry before heading into battle.

The interruption came while Judith Collins, the leader of the right-wing opposition New Zealand National Party, was putting questions to Ardern on indigenous sovereignty.

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inequalities in the nation's healthcare service -- according to CNN affiliate RNZ.

It is the second time in a matter of months that Waititi has been ejected from parliament. In February, he was ordered to leave after refusing to wear a necktie. The politician argued the requirement suppressed indigenous culture, and parliament subsequently dropped the rule.

"Over the past two weeks, there has been racist propaganda and rhetoric towards tangata whenua," Waititi said during his first point of order on Wednesday, using a Māori term that refers to New Zealand's indigenous population. "That not only is insulting, but diminishes the manner of this House."

The Speaker responded that he felt nothing out of order had been said during the weekly Question Time debate, in which Collins was quizzing Ardern. "I'm asking the member to make sure that if he has a point of order, it is a fresh and different one," the Speaker later added, as Waititi refused to take his seat.

"Fresh and different point of order, Mr. Speaker," the Māori Party co-leader replied.

"When it comes to views of indigenous rights and indigenous peoples, those views must be from indigenous people ... they can't be determined by people who are not indigenous," he said, criticizing a "constant barrage of insults" toward the population.

During that exchange, Waititi's microphone was turned off. "The member's mic is off so he will resume his seat," the Speaker said. In response, the politician began the haka before quickly being ordered to leave.

Māori, who make up about 15% of New Zealand's population, were dispossessed of much of their land during Britain's colonization of the country. Thousands of Māori have protested for civil and social rights in recent years, and have criticized governments for failing to address social and economic inequalities.

In February, Ardern's government announced plans for a national syllabus on Māori history. Ardern also appointed the country's first indigenous female foreign minister, Nanaia Mahuta, in November last year.

© Thomas Coughlan/AP Indigenous New Zealand lawmaker Rawiri Waititi, center, performs a Māori haka in parliament on Wednesday, May 12, 2021.

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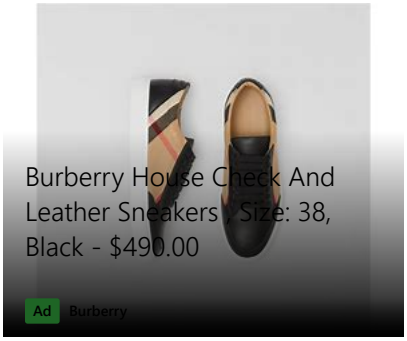


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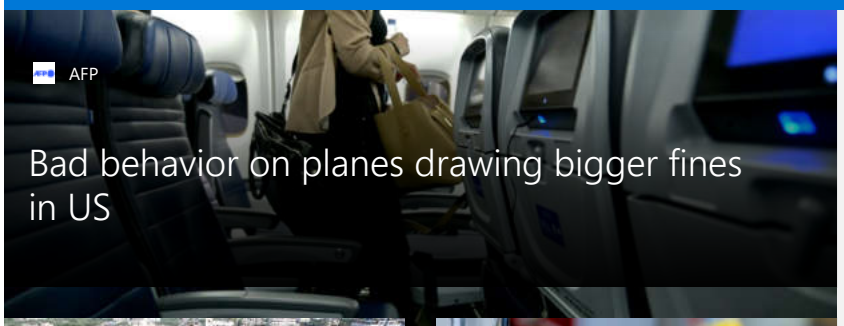

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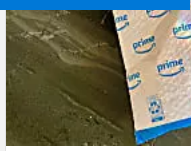

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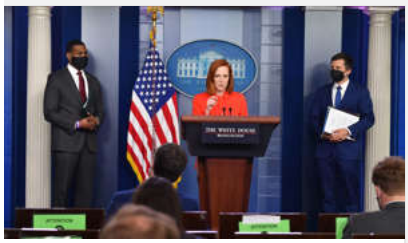

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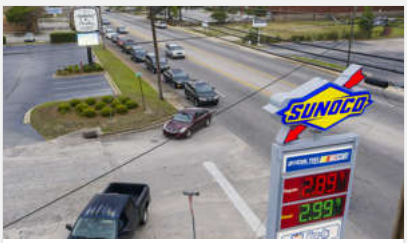


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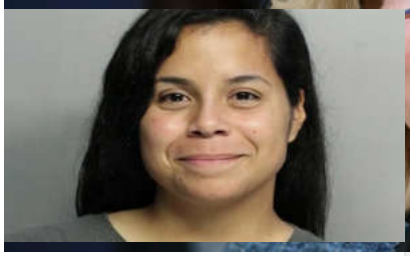

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More than 75 Asian and LGBTQ groups are opposing an anti-Asian crime bill that recently passed through the Senate. In a statement posted to the blog "Reappropriate," the groups said they opposed the COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act because it "relies on anti-Black, law enforcement responses to the recent

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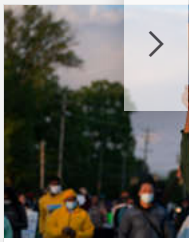

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